

City of Alexandria, Virginia  
PARK AND RECREATION COMMISSION  
Regular Meeting  
Thursday, April 21, 2016, 7:00 p.m.  
Charles Houston Recreation Center  
(901 Wythe Street)  
Alexandria, VA 22314

Summary Minutes

**Commission Members:** Jennifer Atkins, Chair; Judith Coleman, Vice Chair, Gina Baum, Rich Brune, Secretary, Jesse O'Connell, Brian McPherson, Michael Peter, Catherine Poulin, Angela Lalwani (present briefly).

**Absent:** Danielle Baker, Stephen Beggs

**RPCA Staff:** James Spengler, Director; William Chesley, Deputy Director, Recreation Services; Jack Browand, Division Chief, Planning, CIP, and Waterfront Operations; Dinesh Tiwari, Deputy Director, Park Operations, Iris Portny, Recording Secretary.

**Absent:** Robin DeShields, Executive Assistant, Laura Durham, Open Space Coordinator, Acting Director Chinquapin Park Recreation Center and Aquatics Facility, Dana Wedeles, Park Planner, and Bethany Znidersic, Park Planner.

**Other City Staff:** Jason Kacamburas, Coordinator Potomac Yard Metrorail Station, Department of Project Implementation (DPI).

**Guests:** Carolyn Griglione.

**I. Call to Order:** Jennifer Atkins, Chair, called the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m.

**II. Presentations:**

A. Update on Potomac Yard Metrorail Station: Concept Plans for Potomac Greens and Potomac Yard Parks, and Metro Station design. To view presentation goes to

<https://www.alexandriava.gov/uploadedFiles/recreation/info/PYMetroPresentation21Apr2016.pdf>

*Note: Coleman recused from participation in discussion on this project*

Kacamburas reviewed the site plan's overall highlights, station design options, and activities during the previous month.

***Design issues*** - Kacamburas said the likely Mezzanine design option will be Option 1. The Board of Architectural Review favorably reviewed all three mezzanine and platform options. The National Park Service strongly favors Option 1. Commissioners preferred Option 1. He said the City is working with WMATA on a Metrorail station security fence design and reviewed the landscaping ideas being considered.

***Construction-related impacts on parks*** - Tiwari said the 36-month construction period is expected to impact two City parks, Potomac Greens Park to the station's east and Potomac Yard Park to the west. He said parts of the park will be closed to the public during construction. The existing wetland will be temporarily closed during construction. The wetland area will be restored after the construction of the station, and it will eventually be connected to the park using trails, boardwalks and signage. The ultimate goal is to restore the wetland to its original condition or better.

***Playground*** - Tiwari said there is a proposal to temporarily relocate the existing playground during construction so it can be used. The playground would be fenced off from the construction and closer to the street, but there are still some community concerns that the playground would be too close to construction. Tiwari said there are also community concerns about potential airborne hazards from construction-related dust. He said the City will take all actions needed to mitigate environmental hazards during construction and get permits from the Army Corps of Engineers, US EPA and the Department of Environmental Quality. He said the proposed site for relocating the playground is the only City-owned property available. Kacamburas said relocating the playground is still being discussed with the community.

***Bicycle/Pedestrian Bridge*** - Kacamburas reviewed the Bridge design options and pointed out where bike storage would be located. He said it is not yet decided whether the City or WMATA will own the Bicycle/Pedestrian Bridge but if WMATA owns the bridge it would be closed during late night/early morning hours. Kacamburas said Community discussions continue about the 24/7 hours question.

***Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)*** - Kacamburas said NPS and FTA comments on the draft EIS were received on April 18, 2016, and are being reviewed and incorporated. The finalized draft EIS will be posted for a 30-day public comment period.

**Upcoming hearings** - Kacamburas said upcoming public meetings are on the City's website, including a June 7 Planning Commission meeting and June 16 Special City Council public hearing. Tiwari said June 16 public hearing date conflicts with the P&RC's meeting date for June.

**Timeline** - Kacamburas said WMATA plans to advertise its design/build contract by July 2016, execute it in spring 2017 and have a station groundbreaking in fall 2017.

**Commission Discussion:**

Brune said the station's design sketch should show more clearly what areas would be affected by whether the Pedestrian/Bike Bridge is open 24/7.

Q: Atkins asked about the station's Bike Storage capacity and noted that having bike parking that meets demand is a P&RC priority. A: Kacamburas will confirm the exact figures with WMATA. He said the bike storage goal for the pavilion's west side is about 75 bikes and a little less for the Potomac Greens side. Tiwari said there will also be a BikeShare station.

Q: Atkins asked if there will be uninterrupted access to the bike trail during construction. A: Tiwari said the project's Development Special Use Permit (DSUP) requires the contractor to preserve continuous access to the bike trail throughout construction, subject to the approval of the City and RPCA will work with the contractor to make sure this happens.

Q: Brune asked if utilization data is available for bike storage at the King Street and Braddock Road Metrorail stations to help predict commuter demand for bike storage at the Potomac Yard Metrorail station. A: Kacamburas said he will look into this.

### **III. Items for Information:**

**A. Public Comments – non agenda items.** There were none.

**B. Updates:** Patrick Henry School and Recreation Center.

McPherson said several meetings were held since the last P&RC meeting. The Patrick Henry Project Community Advisory Group (PHP Community Advisory Group) will meet on April 27, 2016 and a Community Meeting will be held on May 4, 2016. He reviewed issues raised by the community and said New Building Option A-1 was developed in response to community feedback. He said most people appear to be fairly satisfied with this latest revision, but Latham Street residents are still concerned about the potential traffic impact if a busway is put behind the school and exits onto Latham Street. He said a variety of issues still need to be accommodated by the design.

***Building Option A-1*** - McPherson said the site's open space would be reduced if a school auditorium is added, but the school's needs are a higher priority than the athletic field. He said Option A-1 provides a separate entrance for the recreation center that would separate daytime recreation center users from school traffic.

***Competing top priorities*** - Browand said the major factor driving the considerations is the need to accommodate many top priorities within a very constricted space.

***Timing*** - Browand said the project goal is to reach the single design phase by late April/early May 2016 to keep the project on schedule and open the facility in fall 2018.

### **Commission Discussion:**

In response to Baum's question, Browand said the forested area up the hill is not part of the site's usable open space because it is a natural resource area on its west end and its topography would make it very expensive to modify for activities.

In response to Atkins' question, Browand said the revised design might be presented at the next Wednesday's PHP Community Advisory Group meeting. The next community meeting will probably be the first week of May 2016.

Coleman asked how the Project's parking and transportation planning fits with the City's environmental goals of reducing reliance on vehicles and maximizing green space. Browand said parking and driveway planning reflects the need to accommodate the school's expected student population, its school staff and users of the recreation center. He said more environmental remediation will be needed to address the additional impervious surfaces but safe access to the buildings has to be the top priority.

Browand said the Advisory Committee discussions have been very useful. Staff is making it clear that trade-offs among the project's top priorities will need to be made.

#### **IV. Items for Action:**

##### **A. Approval of Minutes: February 18, 2016**

Brune moved and O'Connell seconded that the February 18, 2016 minutes be approved with two corrections. The motion was approved by unanimous voice vote.

##### **B. Eisenhower West/Landmark Van Dorn Implementation Advisory Group P&RC Representative:**

The Chair appointed Vice Chair Judy Coleman as Commission representative to the Advisory Group.

#### **V. Division Updates: Recreation Services, Park Operations, Park Planning, Design and Capital Development: **To view full staff reports go to:** <https://www.alexandriava.gov/uploadedFiles/recreation/info/PRCCOMBINEDSTAFFREPORTSAPRIL212016.pdf>**

**Recreation Services:** Chesley said staff is working with the City Youth Master Plan Out of School Time Plan (CYMP OSTP) Working Group on an implementation plan for Out of School Time Programs. He said he expects some data to be available for the May 2016 P&RC meeting from a survey conducted in March 2016 for the CYMP OSTP Work Group. The survey used GIS information to map the locations of current afterschool programs that are available throughout the City for elementary, middle and high school students. He said the OSTP Work Group will use the data to identify service gaps and consider how and where to expand opportunities, improve quality and measure success.

Atkins thanked staff for its very thorough data on program usage. She said it is good to see participation increasing across the board and to have data on subsidized-fee

participation. Atkins thanked staff for including photographs with its Division reports, especially the Jerome "Buddie" Ford Nature Center photographs.

**Commission Discussion:**

***Hunter/Miller Park's lights*** - O'Connell asked when the basketball court lighting will be restored. Browand said staff is working with Dominion Power to fix a meter problem.

***Eisenhower ASA/AlexRenew Field drainage problem*** - Atkins asked when the drainage problem will be fixed. Browand said staff is actively working to resolve a damaged valve problem that is creating the drainage problem under the field's turf.

***Potomac Yard Splash Park*** - In response to O'Connell's question, Tiwari reported that the park is expected to open on time.

***Crumb rubber synthetic turf*** - In response to McPherson's question about rubberized pellets used under the fields, Spengler said he had provided the P&RC with a Loudoun County report that, among the issues covered, had concluded that using organic infill material instead of crumb rubber turf creates its own problems. For example, organic infill freezes and floats off fields during heavy rains and there is no testing done on the sources of the sand. He said an EPA study of whether crumb rubber poses potential health risks probably will not be finished before 2018.

**FY17 Operating Budget and Capital Improvement Program (CIP):**

Atkins thanked staff for giving P&RC the detailed Budget Questions and Answers that RPCA had submitted to Council. Spengler reported that City Council had completed its final budget workshop the previous Tuesday evening and Council's next two budget meetings would be the add/delete sessions.

**Spengler** reviewed some of the RPCA responses to Council's budget questions.

***Minnie Howard carpet*** - Staff advised Council that RPCA's proposed carpet replacement at Minnie Howard could not be combined with the school construction project to save costs because these are completely separate projects.

***Fee increases to restore service cuts*** - Spengler said Council asked if fees for several services could be raised to restore staff-proposed cuts in those services but RPCA said that in most cases higher fees would discourage people from using these services.

***Community Matching Fund Proposal*** - Spengler said there was a good discussion with Council about this staff proposal.

***T.C. Williams H.S. Titans Lounge*** - Spengler said staff provided Council usage data for the year the Titans Lounge was operating and the \$51,000 cost to reinstate it. He said if Council wants to add funds for this it would be during the add/delete budget work session.

***Drop-In Basketball*** - Spengler said Council discussed adding evening drop-in basketball hours at length and Council Members Chapman and Bailey are very interested in having outside and inside drop-in activities. He said staff submitted a memo to Council identifying all the times fields are open throughout the community. He said the cost of staffing the front desk led RPCA to rely on offering on-demand programming to avoid staffing up when services are not used. He said staff also advised Council that data shows there is little teen usage between 6 p.m. and 9 p.m. on school nights. Spengler said he would provide the P&RC a staff memo to Council about the cost of adding evening hours for basketball back.

***Holiday lights*** - Spengler said the cost of keeping holiday lights on all year round was discussed at length.

***Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) Budget*** - Spengler reported that Council made no changes to RPCA's CIP budget request and had approved RPCA's proposal for artificial turf on the Patrick Henry field.

Atkins said a P&RC letter to Council will be sent regarding the FY2017 budget proposal and will urge Council to keep the RPCA Cost Recovery Policy and fee structure as is.

**Note:** P&RC letter is posted to:

<https://www.alexandriava.gov/uploadedFiles/recreation/info/PRCLetterBugetMemo25April2016.pdf>

**VI. Commission Business:** Verbal Reports from Commissioners.

**District I:** Baum, O'Connell, Poulin:

***Waterfront Commission***

***Governance models*** - Baum reported the Waterfront Commission's Governance Subcommittee has been evaluating several governance models for how well they could meet the operations, maintenance and funding needs of the world-class Waterfront being put into place by the City. She said the options include (1) the current City agency management model, (2) a potential non-profit entity, and (3) a potential Community Improvement District (similar to a Business Improvement District). She said the Waterfront Commission is now considering the Governance Subcommittee's preferred model, the Community/Business Improvement District, in more detail. Baum said she has pointed out to the Commission that cuts to RPCA's parks maintenance budget show how important it is for the City to have an additional revenue source for expenses related to Waterfront public spaces. Browand said the main issue is how the City can create an ongoing dedicated revenue source to cover the costs of maintaining and operating the waterfront. He said the Governance Subcommittee plans meetings with the Old Town Civic Association, the business community, and others. Baum said the business community has the most to lose if a new governance model is not properly implemented.

Baum said she will advise the P&RC when the Waterfront Commission's Governance review is far enough along for it be useful for the P&RC to provide comments on the governance models and the parks maintenance levels that will be needed. Browand said he would send the P&RC a link to the Governance Subcommittee's review.

***Waterfront Landscape Design Common Elements*** - Browand said designs have been proposed for the Waterfront Landscape Design's common elements for pavers and lighting in public and private Waterfront spaces. He said public feedback on the designs, especially the two lighting options, is being collected using AlexEngage. Baum handed out information on the two Waterfront promenade lighting options, an urban and a maritime design. Browand invited Commissioners' comments using AlexEngage.

***Underground Transmission Line and Substation Working Group***: Poulin said the group's next meeting is May 5.

***Old Town North Advisory Group*** - O'Connell said the March 24, 2016 Advisory Group meeting focused mainly on organizational issues. He said staff said there is funding available for temporary art installations on Fairfax Street.

***Braddock Interim Park*** - O'Connell said he saw about 40 people playing bocce ball that evening at the Park funded by the PARKnership initiative with the D.C. Bocce League.

***On-line field reservations and availability*** - In response to O'Connell's question, Chesley said staff is investigating options for an online system to track field reservations and availability. Spengler said the staff memo he will provide to P&RC shows that fields are always available in the community.

**District II**: Atkins, Beggs (absent), Peter:

***Potomac Yard Work Group Meeting*** - Atkins asked for a Commissioner to represent the P&RC at the April 25, 2016 Potomac Yard Work Group meeting. Beggs can't attend.

**District III**: Brune, Coleman, McPherson:

***Patrick Henry School and Recreation Center Project*** - See McPherson's update above. (Item III-B).

***Combined Sewer System*** - Brune reported that the Ad Hoc Combined Sewer System Plan Stakeholder Group completed its work and submitted its recommendations to the City.

***Ben Brenman Pond Stormwater Retrofit*** - Coleman said community awareness of the City's planned Ben Brenman Pond Stormwater Retrofit needs to be improved. She asked for T&ES to briefly update the P&RC about its Retrofit plans and to provide P&RC a one-page fact sheet on the Retrofit that can be shared with the public.

***Reduced maintenance schedule*** - Spengler reported that as of July 1, 2016, there will dramatic differences in mowing and pond maintenance. The City will, as always, post the maintenance and mowing schedule on the website prior to the start of the new schedule.

***Ben Brenman Park*** - Coleman said Ben Brenman Park usage continues to increase and the recent Washington Post article on Cameron Station included photos of park activities.

### **Upcoming Meetings**

***May meeting*** - Atkins said tentative agenda items for the P&RC May meeting will include (1) a public hearing on Potomac Yard Park and Potomac Greens Park, (2) a budget update, and a public hearing on the Braddock Metro Neighborhood Park Plan.

***June meeting*** - June 16 P&RC meeting date was changed to June 23 (to avoid a conflict with Council's June 16 public hearing on the Potomac Yards Metrorail station.

Note: P&RC to be briefed at its June or July meeting on the reduced maintenance schedule for stormwater management ponds and other aspects of the Natural Resource Management Plan.

Browand announced the May 14, 2016 ribbon-cutting of the Four Mile Run Project.

Atkins said a T.C. Williams student video on the Hume Springs Park renovation has been posted on-line by park staff. She said there has been a lot of positive feedback on the park and the public - private partnership that made it possible and encouraged people to share the video.

**VII. Next Meeting:** May 19, 2016.

**VIII. Adjournment:** Brune moved and Peter seconded that the meeting be adjourned at 8:58 p.m. The motion passed by unanimous voice vote.